

Letter from Eliza Symonds Bell to Alexander Graham Bell and Mabel Hubbard Bell, December 30, 1877, with transcript

Tutelo Heights, Brantford, Ont., Can., December 30th, 77. (No envelope) My dear Alec and Mabel,

This I fancy will be the last letter I shall write in 1877., and I wish we could greet you on the first of next year as you did us on Christmas day.

Your messages half broke the consciousness of your absence and were received with merry faces all round. We have not yet heard of the little parcel you sent by Sophie's friend, but if Mrs. Hollingshed had it in charge, we shall soon, I dare say, as I believe she has got home. Christmas morning brought me a small package through the post which at first I concluded to be the gift you alluded to. It consisted of a handsome black silk apron trimmed with white lace. However Papa and all said it was quite impossible, for it was marked the 24th, and Mrs. Hollingshed had not touched land at that time. Failing this I have not the slightest idea who sent the apron. We have read an account in the paper of the satisfactory test of the telephone between Dover and France, and also of its adoption in Germany. The last copy of the "Times" we had laments the high price put upon the telephone's use, which will the "Times" expects, very much impede its general adoption. My last enclosed a note in which Papa explained a discovery he had made in multiplying communications through one telephone to several listeners at once, and sent you an 2 outline of a holder for the several tubes. He has since improved the latter. It is just a sphere 5 inches in dimaeter, upon which nine tubes can be screwed. Plenty of correspondence goes on through our telephone and the Town. It is so funny sometimes when Papa is from home. Mary and Louisa are introduced per telephone to entire strangers, and have to keep up conversations with them. I may add that the call-

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bell is almost sure to sound at mealtimes especially dinner, which often necessitates quite a scramble to obtain. I propose ringing the dinner bell through the telephone in future as a sign that mouths are going to be otherwise engaged. The new globe holder of which I enclose a sketch, answers beautifully. The tubing as large as that I use answers best—this line measures its exact circumference. You can buy it at any of the guttapreacha shops for one shilling per foot, and at a wholesale manufactory for much less. I have very little chitchat to narrate, but we have had the most remarkable Christmas weather I can remember. We had ten days of thick scotch mist, we thought the sun had vanished entirely, but he crept out last Tuesday and has been visible ever since. We actually have had two or three little icicles outside of one of the windows today. The roads have been in such a frightful state with mud, that poor old Polly cannot often drag us through, and Papa almost habitually walks now. Polly will not last much longer, I fancy, and both Papa and I dread having another horse, though I do believe one half the passers by make merry at her expense. All are well in Town, Papa and I are to meet a party of middle-aged guests there on Friday, and our young people a party more youthful on New Year's night. We have not seen Carrie for a fortnight, and the muddy roads have prevented us from paying a visit to her. I have not heard from Mrs. Hubbard since I wrote last. I hope my Alec, you are now quite well, and quite free from cold, you had when Mabel wrote last. I hope you wear under flannels, and if you still have any remains of the cold, do pray keep in the house till it is well. By the way I am going to tell you a dream! I do not suppose I dream once in a couple of years, but I had a very vivid one four or five days ago. I dreamed that going through the hall, I saw the shadow, through the coloured glass, of somebody standing outside. I opened it and behold you were standing there, with four large loaves tucked under your arms, but Mabel I thought, where is she? When I went down stairs our servant said to me, "I had such a curious dream last night, I thought the family were all from home and young Mr. and Mrs. Bell arrived unexpectedly. They were very hungry and I could find nothing but little scraps to give them. Mr. Bell told me to go and get him some fish". Now I want to know if you really were starving about that time?

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You will think me hard up for a subject when I detail such nonsense, but nonsense will sometimes relieve a man's overworked brain, if it makes him laugh.

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I hope our dear Mabel continues well and free from cold.

How does the housekeeping go on? You have now been nearly one month in the business. I wrote last Sunday and addressed to your own house. The two previous to the care of Mr. Horne with papers also, we hope all have been duly received. Papers accompany this as well.

In one you will read of a curious experiment with the telephone. Papa was called to converse through the telephone yesterday, with a lady(whom he does not know) from Detroit. She told him she had read in a Detroit paper, a sketch of the Bell family! Giving an account too of our courtship and marriage! Papa told her he thought it must be a mistake, but she said she would try and get the paper. Papa thinks it must be the performance of some "penny a liner", for who in Detroit could possibly know anything about it.

Of course we are both on the qui vive to see it.

Good bye my dears, there may be some news tomorrow, but I must send this to post before I can know.

Papa and cousins all join in dear love, with that of your,

Affectionate Mother, E. G. Bell.